

Resiliency

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Loss of Students or Teachers

On any given school day, there will be at least one student in a school system experiencing loss of some sort. This could stem from the loss of a family member, close friend, or loved one. A sense of loss could develop from many other factors as well, parents separation or divorce, changing schools, an illness in the family, or even imprisonment of a family member are all examples of other ways students could be experiencing loss. Experiencing loss is difficult in any situation, but when it is the loss of a student or teacher it becomes an almost unimaginable situation that must be dealt with quickly and with delicacy. When it becomes such a school wide event, then it is no longer a situation of trying to console a lone student or two on their home issues, it suddenly becomes a situation of trying to console and manage hundreds of students, staff, and faculty.

Helping Students Cope

Experts have claimed that students who operate with unresolved grief begin to show strong signs of deterioration of behavior. Students may suddenly be doing poorly in school, acting out, risk taking, and even substance abusing. It is essential that schools remain active in locating and assisting problems students may be having due to loss. So when you have an entire school filled with [grieving students](#), how do you cope with that? One expert claims that there are [four key components](#) to provide grieving children. The first suggestion is to maintain schedules and routines within the school. Having a sense of normalcy can help students cope with the sudden and intense emotions and can assist teachers in being strong and setting an example for their classes. The second is love, having the adults around to

support them through words and actions. Third is honesty about the situation and grief, though this one depends on the age of the grieving child and their needs. Lastly is security. It is important for students to be able to grow through the pain and put the fear behind them. This in turn helps to build students well-being as they cope with their problems. Having a staff that can respond to loss is just as important as teaching the students their basic subjects.

Responding Roles

When responding to a death there are [several different roles](#) that faculty members must take on. Once the death has been completely confirmed with no doubt as to it, the principal takes over with immediate action. The principal should be in constant contact with school administrators to make sure everyone is on the same page. They must contact the faculty and develop a plan. Together they must figure out if curriculum needs to be pushed back in order to allow grieving time, tests should be postponed, and the principal should be there for the teachers. They must then move on to notifying students and being prepared to share information on the funeral plans as well as beginning coordination on a memorial. The last job a principal must cover in such a time of crisis is the most important, they must be available. By being out in the hallways and letting students see them, they are helping to assure students that things will be all right and calming down the situation some.

The principal is not the only faculty member who must be prepared to take on some new responsibilities. The guidance counselor, caseworker, or whoever the school has in that sort of role must be prepared to empty their schedule. They must be open at all times of the school day for students coming to them to talk. These employees should set up times for counseling with students whether it is individual or with groups, they should also have the contact information for other counseling services. Certain parents may need to be contacted depending on how their child is reacting to the situation.

These workers should also ensure that they keep detailed records of who comes to them throughout the troubled period.

Teachers have possibly the most important role to play. As the primary source of interaction with students they must be prepared to answer any and all question, dispel rumors, and model a strong reaction. Teacher must ensure that student's understand they are allowed to react, however they need to and to let their emotions out. In some cases it may be appropriate to have a class discussion about the death in order for students to let out any struggling thoughts or feelings they may contain. If discussion does not seem the appropriate route then sometimes distracting activities can also be a good idea. Mostly though, teachers should keep a sharp eye on their students to identify the ones who are truly struggling and may require more help and support.

Suicide versus Natural



Picture [from](#) Permission Pending

Now we must consider the manner of the death. Was the student or teacher killed? Did they die of a terminal illness? Was it sudden? Was it suicide? If the death occurred to suicide, immediate action must be taken in the form of post-vention, procedures which have been laid out by the [American Association of Suicidology](#). The procedures are an attempt to teach students about suicide, provide support, and hopefully help to avoid a repeat action. The association encourages school administrations to not encourage students to attend the funeral, to not create memorials for them, and to not hold an assembly to honor the lost member of the community. It is important to not glamorize the person or their actions. Instead the school should focus all their efforts into talking with the students honestly, offering support, and reminding them that help and support are always available to them no matter what. In the case of a sudden death, faculty and staff must work hard together to maintain their composure enough to help their students. The routine is the same as listed above, but the emotional and psychological impact can be greater due to no forewarning in order to prepare for that possible outcome. Regarding the funeral, schools may handle it differently. The common procedure is to allow students to be excused from school in order to attend so long as they have a note of permission from their parents or guardians. Some schools may provide buses to the funeral, but a note must still be provided. In all cases parents should be encouraged to attend the funeral with their children for an extra measure of support. If it is a teacher that passes away then schools may decide to cancel for the day of the funeral so that all faculty, staff, and students may have the opportunity to attend.

Other Types of Loss

Loss can be experienced by large groups from a school even if it is not connected with the school directly. If the parent of a student passes away and several students knew the parent well or

often spent time at the house of the student in question, that group and quite possibly the entire class of the student may suddenly all be experiencing varying degrees of grief. In cases such as these the school should reach out to the family to offer their support. Counseling services might set up group sessions for those closely linked to the family or even for the class in general. The school could also help the students find a productive output for their emotions as a way to do something nice for the peer and the family of the peer.

Balance



Picture [from](#) Permission Pending

When balance is brought into a conversation, most people generally begin to think about centers of balance, people tripping over their own feet, or trying to balance on a thin edge. What other types of balance are there though? Balance is an important concept to be considered in schools. If students are

not balanced emotionally then their work in school could decline and it could create other undesired side effects.

More and more frequently, teachers find themselves under increasing pressure to raise performance standard, improve their teaching practices, and other similar pressures. The added weight of these things can cause some teachers to overload their students and to focus so much on the workload that they neglect their student's well-being as well as their relationship with the students. Studies show that creating [strong bonds](#) with students helps them to feel reassured that they are cared about in school and they then perform better as a result. A group of students when questioned stated that having a strong connection with someone who believed in them, helped them to succeed and to want to do better. Having that emotional balance of someone who cared while still being challenged in school helped the students rise to their highest potential.

Feeling [supported by an adult figure](#) is only part of obtaining that balance in schools. Another part is having an outlet other than just class work and projects. Students need to feel engaged by joining a sport or a club where they can interact with peers in a low stress environment and take their mind off of their work load for a while. Joining athletics helps to inspire students to make more positive decisions in their life.

Students are not the only ones who need to deal with balance in their lives though. Teachers struggle with balance, perhaps more than students. Teaching is one of the [highest stress level jobs](#) out there. It is for this reason that many teachers either leave the profession or retire early due to their claims of being burnt out. Teachers must not only look out the well-being of their students by not overloading them with work or giving them assignments which are beyond their capabilities, they must also look out for overburdening themselves. Teachers do not get to escape the school grounds at two everyday like

the students get to. Many take on extra responsibilities in the school such as helping in a sport, club, or committee. Add that to meetings, grading, and lesson planning, teachers have a lot to do. While students can find that balance by having a strong connection in their lives and finding an outlet for their energy and frustration, teachers may not have that luxury. They must keep an eye on their own stress levels as well as those of their students, however, and find their own sort of outlets to escape the demands of their job. This way they avoid the burnout that so many teachers claim to suffer from.

Bouncing Back

While waking up you stub your toe on your dresser, then you end up having your mind wander making you take a wrong turn on your way to work. When you finally make it to your classroom you find you have an email telling you that a student in which you have spent the past two months personally tutoring after school has just committed suicide. You feel broken and overwhelmed, how can you possibly face your students when the bell rings? Whether there is a tragic incident, or our students have just driven us to the edge, educators need to know how to bounce back. Everyone is different, however there are five surefire ways to [build resilience](#) so that you are able to bounce back. The ways to build resilience so that you can bounce back are; being able to see the silver lining, accepting change, have self confidence, self preservation, and expressing yourself through writing.



Silver Lining

When thinking about finding the bright side of events, I think of Pollyanna. [Pollyanna](#) was a young girl who no matter what life threw at her she found a bright side to it. [Finding the silver lining](#) is not the easiest thing to do, but it is a key thing to being able to go to school and take care of the needs of

your classroom, and students. To some finding the silver lining comes naturally, but others need to work at it. If you find yourself wondering how this could ever possibly be a good thing then ask yourself these three questions; how has this helped me grow, what can I do now that I couldn't do before, and am I proud of the way I handled this?

Sharon is a high school history teacher in Pine Bluff Arkansas. The day before her school experienced a shooting in which two teachers were killed and one student was placed in the hospital in critical condition. Even though it wasn't part of her unit she felt the need to address the situation with her students so that everyone would be able to heal. She was able to sensitively address the situation, and give her students some examples of where they have happened in the past and some understanding of why they happen. After returning home she reflects on the situation and tries to find the silver lining. She finds that she is now equipped to teach her future students about the reasonings behind tragedies that happen through time and in the world today.

Accepting Change

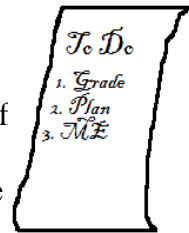
As we pass through time the world around us changes. Technology continues to advance, the number of standards increases, and the number of funds educators receive keeps decreasing. The only thing that never seems to change is our students need to learn from us. A key to bouncing back is to accept these changes and move on to helping students.

Sean is a middle school physical education teacher in Fitchburg Massachusetts. Very recently Sean was told that due to budget cuts his classes would be combined so that instead of having thirty students in his class at a time he would be having sixty. Sean didn't understand how he would be able to handle sixty students running around. At first Sean tried to fight the decision and advocated that having that many students in the gymnasium for phys ed class would result in chaos. As the time went by he felt

more and more frustrated, which interfered with how well he was handling his classes. A parent of one of his students made a meeting with him and told him that their child didn't want to come to school because of his class. It made Sean think, and he decided that rather than hold all of his attention on fighting the expansion of his classes, that he would focus on ways to get all of his students involved. This decision helped him to feel less anxiety and positively affected his classroom.

Self Preservation

Being an educator leaves little time for anything else. Constant work without taking time for yourself will take a toll on your [body](#) and your [mind](#). Prolonged stress can cause serious health problems that can negatively affect your classroom and the ability for you to teach to your students. Which is why it is so important for you to take care of yourself. Take the time to read a book, go for a walk, socialize, etc. Make sure that you take the time to do something that you love that will relax you.



Eblin is a high school spanish teacher in Susanville California. Her favorite thing to do while on vacations is to read a book while laying out in the sun on her back porch. During the school year Eblin doesn't find the time to relax or to read. She is too busy making plans for her lesson and grading. It is now January and a school break is not until April. Eblin has started to feel sharp pains in her stomach, the pain was so bad that she went to the hospital. The doctor told her that she has stomach ulcers, gave her a prescription and told her to relax. Eblin decided that she would set up a time in her schedule to read at least twice a week.

Writing

Diaries and Journals are meant to record events and feelings of *Today...* an individual. A key strategy to bouncing back is writing things down.

Once an event and feeling is written it is easier to let it go. Once it's on paper it is as if the event or feeling has been lifted, and it's okay to move on with the rest of the day.

Fred is a high school history teacher in Madison Maine. As a child he enjoyed reading the [Dear America books](#) (diaries written by children from historically important time periods). During his first year of teaching he decided that he would write down everything that happened during the class period and how he felt about it. The next year he was given classes that were specific to events and time periods. He spent the year researching and found no time to write. He quickly became overwhelmed and wondered why his first year was so much better. For an assignment he had his students journal about their lives to incorporate the Dear America books into his plans. He found that almost immediately his anxiety was dramatically smaller. Writing had allowed him to move on to focus on his students rather than to bottle up all of his emotions.

Emotional Quotient

“Emotional Intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.”([Wendy Lemke et al](#)) When asked most people either don't know what emotional quotient is, or they have heard about it and have no idea how it affects them. An individual's emotional quotient is a big part of who they are. It's present when you see that there is a person staring at you with knowing eyes. It's the tiny voice inside of you telling you that you need to get your butt in gear and grade those papers. Everyone has an emotional intelligence just as everyone has an intelligence quotient. The strategy to find someone's score is the same in both cases. You must take a



test, immediately the test gives you your score. As tests usually go; the higher the score, the higher your intelligence. There are two categories and 5 sub categories that [make up an emotional quotient](#). The intrapersonal evaluation piece deals with self-emotions. Self-emotions refers to self aware, self regulatory, and self motivational. The other piece, interpersonal, evaluates the perception a person has with others emotions. These perceptions help with social skills and empathy. After taking the [test](#), you will receive a percentage to others scores for free, and a detailed report if you pay. Once you are aware of your emotional intelligence you are able to either make accommodations that will help to increase your performance in that area, or you can use your strengths to your advantage.

Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience is really important in the classroom. If a teacher does not stay resilient, they will burn out quickly and lose their love for teaching. If you are feeling burned out on teaching, it is not too late for you. There are many different seminars that teachers can attend to help them gain the resilience that they might have had in the beginning or just never had. CARE for teachers put on a seminar every summer at the Garrison Institute in Garrison New York. This seminar lasts five days and offers over 37 hours of training. The teachers that are willing to spend the money have felt great about the experience. One of the main problems that plague teachers is the problem of time. Usually teachers stress over time but teachers that went through the CARE system did not stress over time as much because they did not rush things and they did not spend a lot of time worrying about how little time they had to do something. Teachers also felt like they could handle their students better and their relationships with students got better. This program allows teachers to focus more on the students because their resiliency is stronger after going through all of these seminars and meetings. Teachers who felt like they were losing interest in the field were rejuvenated and began to love teaching again.

Teaching requires a lot of work and the focus on standardized testing, curriculum, special needs, social inclusion, behavior management and many other important details of teaching. This can be a lot for a teacher who is just arriving in the field. To build your resilience, you can do many things like acknowledge the complex, intense and unpredictable nature of teachers' work, develop curriculum that is easy to be delivered, need to ensure access to ongoing support, and have access to resources and learning opportunities about resilience. Once you understand that teachers' work is hard and tiring you can better understand how to plan everything out and balance your time. Time management is the most cause of burnout in teachers. Developing curriculum that is easy to be delivered and understood and a great way to stay resilient. If you plan out a huge lesson and your students do not understand it, you have wasted a lot of your time that you could have been doing on a smaller lesson that made the opportunity for all students to understand. If you have access to ongoing support like other teachers in your community or from another state or country, you can talk to them about the problems that you are facing and everyone can talk about how to fix the problem and give suggestions on how this might work. Learning more about resilience will allow teachers to better understand what they are going through and will continue to give them new ideas on how to stay strong and not burnout. It will also help them deal with their students and how to get them to stay strong and motivated in the classroom which will make both the students and the teachers' lives better.

In the article, *Challenges to teacher resilience: conditions count*, the authors, Gu and Day show that the socioeconomic status of the school can also affect how resilient a teacher is. In their study, they were looking for how effective teachers in their study were and the contributing factors of the variations between all of the teachers. One large part was the teacher's view on their own effectiveness and how well the students did in their class. But one of the most interesting findings was that depending

on how many students in the school that teachers work at that receives Free School Meals (FSM) can be the determining factor of how resilient a teacher can be and is. Gu and Day broke up the schools into four categories. These are FSM 1, FSM 2, FSM 3 and FSM 4. FSM 1 schools have 0-8% of students that are eligible for free school meals. FSM 2 schools have 9–20% of students eligible for free school meals. FSM 3 schools have 21–35% of students are eligible and FSM 4 schools have 36%+ of students eligible. As this graph shows, the more students that are eligible for free school meals has a direct effect on the percent of teachers that are resilient. In most cases it was a negative effect except for FSM 4 schools. Teachers in these schools were even more resilient than FSM 1 schools. 75% of Teachers at FSM 1 schools were resilient, 71% of Teachers were resilient at FSM 2 schools, 58% of schools were resilient at FSM 3 schools and 84% of Teachers were resilient at FSM 4 schools.

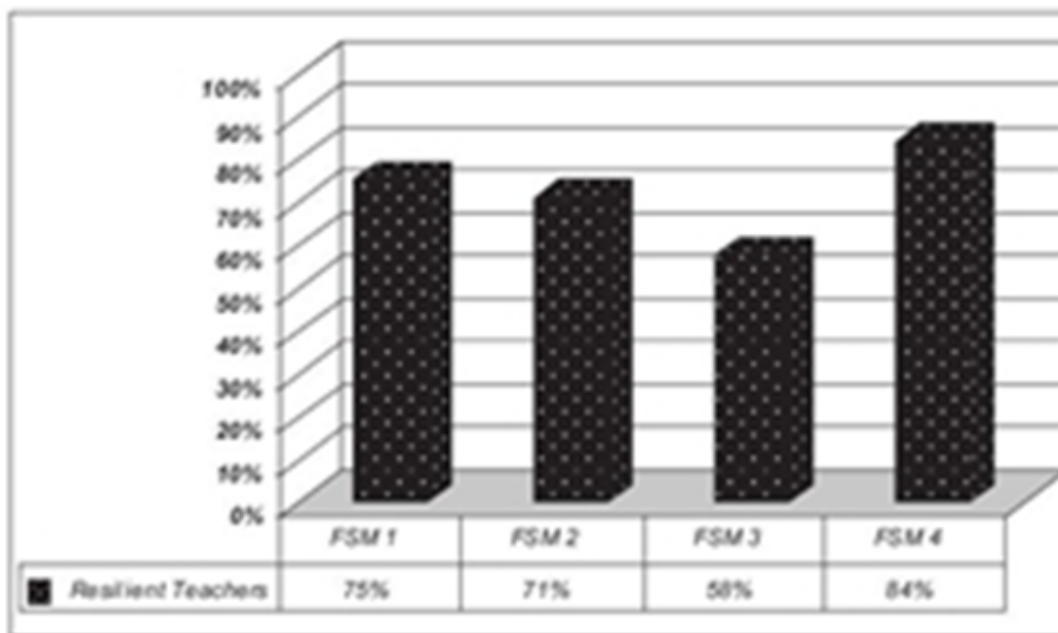


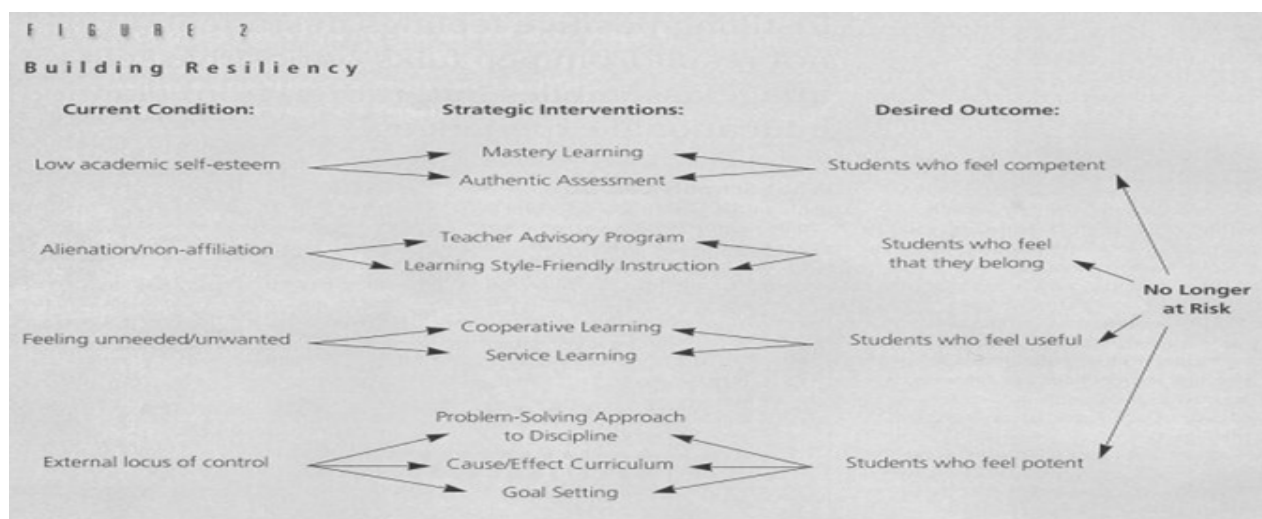
Figure 2. Teacher resilience and school contexts (measured by % of pupils eligible for free school meals)

The reason for this jump up in FSM 4 schools is because these teachers tended to be the teachers that wanted to be helping these disadvantaged students. These teachers were the ones that really wanted to make a difference in student's lives so they chose these schools specifically and this helped them keep up their resilience. These were already the strong willed teachers who had plenty of resilience to keep going day in and day out.

Teacher resilience is important. Teachers cannot forget to take care of themselves because they need to stay strong and be there for the students. If teachers are not resilient, they will not last in the profession. There are many ways to help build resilience and keep resilience, you can go to a seminar, research, talk about it with colleagues and other teachers, and understand students and their backgrounds so teachers will know what students will need from them.

Student Resilience

Student resilience is just as important as resilience in teachers. Students might even be more important because students drive can affect the stress levels of a teacher which determines their resiliency in the classroom. One method of building resiliency in students is to use the CBUPO method. This stands for Competence, Belonging, Usefulness, Potency and Optimism. These methods are usually already in schools and can be seen if you shadow the most successful students in the schools. If these are already present in schools, we can build off of these strategies to find why they work for some students and not for others. We need to find the best way to help all the students get to these levels of resilience. When the ACSD do this with schools and faculty, they ask the teachers about their practices, whether they are organization or instructional, and then show which of the CBUPO traits are reinforced with each practice. Teachers can use this information to make a web that looks like this.



Teachers then need to collect data and assess what works. If these strategies do not help every student, teachers will need to go back to the drawing board and find more ways that they can reach students and build their resilience in these areas. The ACSD also remind teachers that resilience will take time to build but it does not have to take up a lot of time. Done the right way, resilience will be done in a fast manner and be very effective with not a lot of classroom time expended.

The biggest way that students' resilience and anyone's resilience works is the fact that it is all cognitive. The way that people think determines on how resilient they will be. The ABCS of Resilience can explain how students can get over issues and use resiliency to overcome adversity. A is for adversity, B is for believing and C is for consequence. Adversities are obstacles and troubles that students have to face in school, like failing a class. When two different students both fail the same class, they can react very differently. One student could get a tutor and try really hard in the next semester. The other student decides that school is not important and they give up on their studies and do not try in class or to even attend class. Both of these students have different beliefs on how to fix their problems. The beliefs that are triggered determines if the student will face a consequence or overcome and make a

good reaction. Students that can overcome their adversities with positive beliefs are the ones that will stay resilient and make it through school being successful.

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